

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, October 12, 2011

Present:

Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair
Dave Culmer
Fred Flores
Ramon Rodriguez
Steve Rosmarin
Stephanie Stone

Absent:

Commissioners

Mark MacCarley

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Colonel Joseph Smith, Director
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Steve Rosmarin. Commissioner Rodriguez motioned to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Commissioner Rosmarin and they were approved unanimously.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta stated that he was glad to see everyone present and he introduced himself as Chair of the Commission with 23 years on the Commission. He stated that Vice Chair Gay from the City of Glendale has been on the Commission for the last 10 years. Commissioner Culmer is a Commissioner and a VA representative in the VA hospital and Commissioner Stone the newest Commissioner has been on the Commission for 2 years. Commissioner Rosmarin on the Commission since 1990 and a current resident of the Home; Commissioner Rodriguez is a retired Sergeant Major and has 12 years on the Commission. He stated that the Commission represents all the services and they will champion a cause that will help and aid any veteran or veterans.

Chair Archuleta informed the audience that during this time in which he provides the Chairman's Report he has the opportunity to share what he's done during the past month. He wanted to thank the City of Garden Grove, even though it's Orange County, for receiving and hosting the Moving Wall. He was their emcee of ceremony and they had bag pipers and the police department did a 21-gun salute. They like to recognize those that have done an outstanding job as did the City of Garden Grove.

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During 9/11 the Commissioners covered many events and memorial services; they are trying to bring recognition to those that have served. The Chair pointed out that they are concerned about the issues women veterans face like PTSD and Military sexual trauma. Women veterans need all the help they can get because they have given so much for country.

Chair Archuleta introduced General Peter Gravett, Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Commission and all present. General Gravett addressed everyone present stating that he is also concern with various veteran issues and he's interested to hear what everyone has to say regarding helping veterans.

Chair Archuleta stated that like General Gravett everyone on the Commission is a veteran and some like our Vice Chair has served under the General in the National Guard, South Korea and in Germany. All comments made during the Commission meeting are recorded and a copy is sent to the County Board of Supervisors. We keep them abreast of all veteran issues and also on updates on the renovation of Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, our veteran building. Colonel Smith stated that \$60 million has gone into the refurbishment of the Hall and now it has been decided that the building will be getting a parking structure. The Completion date for the building refurbishment is August 2012.

Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

Commissioner Rosmarin introduced Bea Cohen, 101 years of age, was in World War I as a young child from Romania. Her husband was a 3½ year as a prisoner of war in Corregidor. Ms Cohen thanked the Commission and Commissioner Rosmarin for the invitation and stated that when she was a little girl she knew that America was a wonderful place. She recalls that airplanes flying overhead in 1914 the beginning of World War I she was suppose to be coming to America but went to England from Scotland and 30years later her husband became a prisoner of war. Never let them forget our heroes, she stated, 10% of the country's population are veterans and so many of them are homeless in downtown. She's trying to introduce a program that if you buy a pair of socks then the additional pair is for a homeless.

Ms. Cohen stated that everyone should remember what, "God Bless America" means, to be a proud to be an American and proud to have served our country.

Commissioner Stone stated that she has joined Goodwill Industries on a new County-funded veteran's employment project. The program has served 380 clients since April, with 20 completing training and 17 being placed in jobs so far. Information on all these specialized programs is available through the county's network. Job-seekers of every background and experience level can get training, resume-writing help, interview coaching and other services.

She is asking that the Commission write a Letter of Support for Goodwill Industries supporting the program and recognizing the need to find jobs for veterans. The County of Los Angeles has the largest number of homeless veterans in the state.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if the federal government was going to pass a law for a tax exempt. Commissioner Stone stated she couldn't speak on federal law.

Chair Archuleta stated that any company employing a veteran will get a tax exemption.

Commissioner Stone stated that she joined Goodwill in speaking before the Homeless Authority Planning meeting. "We're doing this not because we need the tax exemption; the mission of Goodwill is to serve the underserved. The disabled are the vets."

Commissioner Gay stated that last month there was a representative from the City of Glendale who reported that they have a day dedicate to serving veterans. "There is a lot of information that doesn't go out to those who need it and we need to get the word out. I've been working with Public Affairs for the National Guard and talking to veterans and others on what is being done and what more needs to be done."

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Commissioner Stone asked to be supportive of her and Goodwill. Colonel Smith stated that the Commission should send a letter to Goodwill.

Colonel Smith said they had been in contact with Goodwill who has a \$700,000 grant but the Department was not able to have a collaborative with them due to space limitations. The Department currently collaborates with the Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles (TFLA) who has provided 400 jobs for veterans. The Workforce Development Board & Employment Development Department put the grant out and Goodwill Industries got awarded.

Motion by Commissioner Gay: To have a Letter of Support from the Veterans Advisory Commission in support of Goodwill Industries and its commitment and willingness to help veterans on the road to a successful and fulfilling career by providing excellent employment services. Motion seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez, all in favor except Commissioner Stone who did not vote.

Rick Rogers, media host of Front & Center, Military Talk Radio, is a San Diego County's and Southern California's first and only military talk radio show, information on topics ranging veteran unemployment, GI Bill benefits and VA medical policies. Mr. Rogers wants to expand into Los Angeles County where there are 300,000 veterans and outreach is very difficult when it comes to administer news. We don't have to deal with politics just talk about veteran issues. For more information log on to: www.defensetracker.com.

Chair Archuleta stated he would do something very different at this meeting and asked that everyone in the audience introduce themselves.

Jenny Morgan	Brentwood Path
Irene Cruz	American Legion
Bea Cohen	veteran
Mat Davidson	Vietnam Vet, New Directions
Rachel Felter	New Directions
Karen Howard	Domiciliary on VA campus
Terrence Lyons	Strawberry Bulletin
Joseph Chica	USC
Rick Rogers	Defense Tracker
Farrell J. Chiles	Writer/Speaker
Miguel Gonzalez	AM VETS Post 700
Hy Arnesty	Jewish War Veteran and elected Veteran of the Year
Evelyn Sotomayor	Community Health Nurse Coordinator
Louis Koff	Administrator, California Veterans Homes
Dr. Carl McKnight	Department of Mental Health, Navigator
Kieran Down	resident of the WLA Home
Consuella Mackey	Operation Confidence
Gen. Peter Gravett	Secretary, USDVA
Bridgett Slater	New Directions

Commissioner Fred Flores stated that he's worked for Congressman Berman for 20 years and is a member of the American Legion and a Marine. He's the founder of the San Fernando Valley Veteran's Day Parade which he started with his son in 1989 after always driving to Long Beach to participate in their parade. Last year, Admiral Mullen was the Grand Marshall of the San Fernando Valley Veterans Day Parade. This year, the parade will be kicking off at the five 11s, 11/11/11 at 11:11am.

AMVETS (American National) – Representative

Miguel Gonzalez, AM VETS, Pacific Palisades Post 283, attended the AM VETS Convention in St. Louis and elected a new National Commander.

Commissioner Rosmarin asked Mr. Gonzalez if he recalled the incident when the Vet Hunters were not allowed to see Secretary Shinseki speak at the event. And Mr. Gonzalez stated that he wasn't aware and didn't know of the incident.

The California State Home Los Angeles – Louis Koff

Louis H. Koff, Administrator, Veterans Home of California, stated that the 2nd floor of the Home has been filled to capacity with 80 residents. The Motorcycle Ride event on 9/11 was a success and \$10,000 was raised for support of the veterans living here. We now will be able to take them to various activities like baseball games and all this was possible through the Morale Welfare Funds. We are honored to host the Veterans Advisory Commission meeting today and tomorrow are another great opportunity we will have a formal Ceremonial Swearing for Secretary, USDVA, Peter J. Gravett.

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Commissioner Steve Rosmarin thanked Commissioner Stone and others that participated in the 9/11 event. He also informed that there are sponsors that are interested in the being part of the support committee for the Home. He stated that they are working and on October 12th they will have the Committee report and the names of the people who will be participating. Commissioner Rosmarin stated the Home remains the finest facility in the whole country and the care the veterans receive is outstanding.

Commissioner Rosmarin stated that Colonel Smith has been the Department Director the last 20 years and he handles the day to day issues. He also disseminates the Commissions recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith

Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director, Military and Veterans Affairs provided the following report:

- Total National Guard and Reserve personnel activated today total 90,000.
- Recruiting by Armed Services components in September met and/or exceed their goals.
- The Department is a self supporting organization that generates money for the County.
- Last year we dealt with 8,800 documented cases which 2,200 included with Post-Traumatic Stress.
- The Department works with Dr. Carl McKnight on the Navigator Program in conjunction with USC School of Social Work.
- The Local Interagency Network Coordinator James J. Schickel, USMC, Sergeant Major (Retired) is in charge of overseeing the 9 State Regional Collaborative Areas assigned by the State. Sergeant Major Schickel's main office is in our Department.
- The VA will be renewing the veteran identification card and omitting the social security numbers from the new card.
- General Peter Gravett will be hosting a meeting of the Interagency Council in Sacramento to bring various veteran organizations together to discuss veteran issues.
- The Department will be preparing a list of veteran activities and events going on throughout Los Angeles County on Veterans Day November 11th.
- November 5th is the 15th Annual UCLA Football Game at the Rose Bowl which this year is going through a \$153 million remodeling.
- At half-time there will be a ceremony with Secretary Gravett and Lt. General Pawlikowski will recognize Hy Arnesty as Veteran of the Year.

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- December 3-11 is World War II survivors of Pearl Harbor Day and the Greatest Generation Foundation will provide free transportation to Hawaii to those survivors of WWII that have medical clearance by a doctor that states that they are able to travel alone. For more information on the trip and requirements, please call (303) 331-1944.
- Operation Confidence is a tribute to our disabled veterans which will be held on November 19 with Secretary, USDVA, General Peter Gravett will be the keynote speaker.

New Business

Nothing for New Business.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Am Vets representative to discuss why veterans were turned away in St. Louis, Missouri

West Los Angeles Healthcare System – Ralph Tillman

VA Long Beach – Alice Martinez or a representative

Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Renovation Update – Bill Gelpi

Commissioner Carvel Gay will invite two Veterans for November's meeting to offer the Invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Flores; thanked everyone present for their attendance and for supporting for the San Fernando Valley Parade.

Commissioner Culmer; stated that he attended The Montford Point Marine Association, Inc., in the Washington, D.C., August 25th to the 28th and celebrated the 69th Anniversary of the first Marines arriving at Montford Point. During the visit, he attended the Evening Parade, Town Hall discussions, and visited the National Museum of the Marine Corps (NMMC). The expense paid trip was for 100 of the original 20,000 people from 1942-1949 segregated at Camp Lejeune. He was one of the last and closed the place down in June 1949. At the reception General James Amos and his wife personally greeted every Montford Marine that entered the room. I told Mrs. Amos that it was splendid what she was doing personally greeting everyone and she said that she wanted to do this and be here because when she was a little girl in Georgia and saw her father working in the garage she saw a KKK on his hand.

Colonel Smith stated that Commissioner Culmer is modest and didn't mention that the Montford Point Marines will be recognized on Veterans Day in New Orleans at the National World War II Museum with a Congressional Gold Medal.

Commissioner Stone; stated there is space available at the Barstow Veteran Home. She attended the California Women's Conference in Ontario and sat on a panel with Dr. Katz and was on Channel 11. As of today, there are 55% reported victims of military sexual trauma. On October 27, the first college veteran Stand Down at Trade Tech and on November 11, East Los Angeles at Cinco Puntos will have a Veterans Day Event and all are welcome.

Commissioner Rosmarin; stated he was very proud to be with General Gravett today and first met him on a radio station. Also congratulated and stated he is very proud of this year's Veteran of the Year Mr. Hy Arnesty who he's known for over 50 years. Hy Arnesty served in WWII in Korea; he's was a champion rope climber in 1942. Hy Arnesty does a great job.

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Commissioner Rodriguez; thanked everyone for attending and this has been the largest audience in awhile. On November 11, Long Beach will be hosting a Veterans Day Parade and he encouraged everyone to be involved in any event.

Vice Chair Gay; stated that it's a pleasure to be at the Home today but he can't wait until the Commission is back at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall and hopes that everyone goes and visits the building once it opens. He is pleased to state that he served under General Gravett who always thought of his soldiers and took care of them.

Chair Archuleta stated the he recognizes our Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He led men into combat and in leadership and that inspires commandment.

General Peter Gravett; stated, "I do what I do because I enjoy it." He stated that he knew half of the people in the room. He was at Chair Archuleta's wedding. He thanked Commissioner Rodriguez for his friendship and he remembered Commissioner Stone from Navy Days. He stated he's known Colonel Smith for years. He stated this is not about General Gravett but it's about Peter Gravett, the veteran.

Chair Archuleta; stated his sons are going through West Point and he put wings on his son. He told everyone that their present today meant a lot to him and to the Commission. Reminded everyone that 11/11/11 will not happen again, please attend a Veterans Day Event and honor our heroes. Thanked everyone for coming.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Commissioner Rodriguez and seconded by Commissioner Rosmarin. Chair Archuleta adjourned meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
October 12, 2011

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, November 9, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 100 at the Department of Public Social Services site at 2615 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.